



**Testimony of Sarah Matney, MSOL, BSN, RN, CPON, CENP
Senior Vice President, Clinical Services & Chief Nursing Officer
At Connecticut Children's
to the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee
Regarding HB 5441- *An Act Concerning College Graduates Who Work in the Field of
Education or Health Care in the State***

February 6, 2023

Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, and members of the legislature's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our support of HB 5441- *An Act Concerning College Graduates Who Work in the Field of Education or Health Care in the State*.

My name is Sarah Matney and I am the Senior Vice President of Clinical Services as well as the Chief Nursing Officer at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Connecticut Children's is a nationally recognized, 187-bed not-for-profit children's hospital driving innovation in pediatrics. With nearly 3,000 employees and over 1,300 on our medical staff, we are the only hospital in the state dedicated exclusively to the care of children.

I am submitting testimony in support of this legislation because of its potential to help encourage college graduates to pursue health care careers amidst the current health care worker shortage.

At Connecticut Children's, you will often hear our team members say that, "kids are not little adults." Their growing bodies and developing minds come with a unique set of healthcare needs. As a result, a robust pediatric workforce is essential to ensuring that all children have access to experts who are specifically trained to care for them. A key component to ensuring the viability of this workforce is training. As one of the 1% of hospitals nationwide that trains pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists, Connecticut Children's is committed to teaching, developing, and empowering new clinical leaders. We are proud to serve as the primary pediatric teaching hospital for the UConn School of Medicine and also have a teaching partnership with the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University.

As is the case for other hospitals and healthcare providers across the state, we are facing significant workforce shortages and struggle to find qualified staff for many positions in our health system—from medical assistants to child psychologists.

These past several years have been tough for all of us, but healthcare workers have faced unique sacrifices and challenges. In the beginning of the pandemic we faced PPE shortages, lack of knowledge regarding COVID-19, new care protocols, facilities changes, and so much more. I am immensely proud of how our team at Connecticut Children's reacted and continued to provide the best care for our patients, the best way we knew how. But the reality is that many healthcare workers are burnt-out and I worry the message we send to young people is that this career path may not be for them.

We also know that Connecticut is currently facing a pediatric behavioral health crisis, worsened

by the significant workforce shortages at nearly every relevant professional discipline. As much as additional beds, programs, and services are necessary to treat children in behavioral health crisis, improving access requires there must be trained professionals to staff these beds and programs.

Incentives like student loan forgiveness and a more robust health care career pipeline are desperately needed to help ensure hospitals and health systems have the staff they need to provide care to patients.

We also must aim to have a healthcare workforce as diverse as our patient population. As the state investigates new strategies towards tackling our workforce challenges, including loan forgiveness and stronger public-private partnerships, we must ensure that this workforce reflects the communities we serve.

Thank you for your consideration of this position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Emily Boushee (eboushee@connecticutchildrens.org), Government Relations Manager for Connecticut Children's with any questions.